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VERSES.

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1897

BY J. C. L. CLARK.

STUDIES IN BOOKS AND TRAVEL. (This volume, which will include the paper entitled "Tom Moore in Bermuda" published in 1897, may be definitely announced for the Christmas holidays of 1900-1901.)

VERSES. (In the present booklet Mr. Clark has made a definitive selection of his earlier writings.)

VERSES

By J. C. L. CLARK

*“Velox ætas præterit,
Studio detenta.”*

“Like a dream our prime is flown,
Prisoned in a study.”

LANCASTER, MASSACHUSETTS, U. S. A.:

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR

BY WM. H. BENSON, CLINTON, MASS.

1899.

P23505

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1899

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✓Nov. 15. 98

TO
MY DEAR MOTHER

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TO R. K.

“Beware,” you write, “of Adam-zad, the bear that looks
like a man,”

And you make us laugh and shudder, as only the poet can;
Yet away in the northern darkness Christ is speaking thro’ a
man,

And—perhaps you understand him as well as an Englishman
can.

Away in the northern darkness, from the cold of the northern
night,

HIS apostle is crying the message, and you do not hear it
right;

But we who would fain believe him rejoice that he sitteth there,
On the great white throne of the Russias, young Alexander,
the Bear.

THE LEGEND OF THE GREAT ELM

A PENFIELD STORY

Long stilled is the sound of mourning, long dry are the
people's tears;

For Philip Henshaw, the doctor, is dead two hundred years:
And often and often I've heard it, yet I listen with bated
breath

When they tell how Philip Henshaw, the doctor, met his
death.

You've heard of Mother Fernald, and the things she used
to do;

She died in seventeen hundred, *ætatis* ninety-two;
She came as a girl from England—and she came for England's
good—

And for seventy years she lived here, in a little hut in the
wood.

It was in the hot midsummer of sixteen ninety-eight
That the *Hopewell* brig, from Lisbon, brought a damned and
dreadful freight:

In Boston Bay she anchored, and certain of her crew
Came back to their homes in Penfield, and with them the
plague came too.

And the people prayed, and trembled, and fasted before the
Lord,

But little He seemed to heed them, and the pestilence walked
abroad;

And Philip Henshaw, the doctor, saved many from the grave,
And tenderly closed the eyelids of them whom he could not
save.

THE LEGEND OF THE GREAT ELM

A little maid came to the doctor, "O Doctor Henshaw!" she said,

"The old witch mother is sick, I know not but she be dead." The doctor listened kindly; but the parson was standing nigh:

"God's truth, 'tis a judgment on her! Let the old witch woman die."

"Not so," said Henshaw, the doctor, "for why should I pick and choose?

The good God lent me talents, shall I not render His dues?" And he spake to the maiden gently: "Lead on to the woman's side."

And he cured the old witch woman, and he caught the plague, and he died.

And the witch dwelt still in the forest, living wickedly, as before,

Caring naught for church or for parson, and died in a year or more.

But they mourned for Philip Henshaw, and his name is a name apart;

And they say the elm-tree yonder grew out of the doctor's heart.

HARVARDIENSIS CONTRA MUNDUM

You see him with his slouched felt hat,
His dainty oaths and cigarettes,
Who bets his "mun" on Harvard's team,
And, Lord! has often lost his bets;
You talk of his indifference,
You wisely prate about the cliques:
The Harvard man smokes calmly on,
And little your approval seeks.

Walk through the transept over there,
And read those names: when all is done,
A heap of Harvard fellows fought
And bled and *died* in Sixty-one;
I think he's not so different
A brute from what he was before,
If need were for the President
To call three hundred thousand more.

The good old Harvard spirit dead!
"Truth" rotten! — You don't like our looks,
But Phillips was a Harvard man,
And Everett and Phillips Brooks
And Billy Russell—yes, the roll
Is somewhat tedious; well, so long!
But mind we've men in college now
With hearts as strong as theirs were strong.

1896.

Thus wearily the King:

“ No promises

For me of brighter life than this we leave!

But hail! good, tender, faithful Nothingness,

That whispers, ‘ No more joy, no longer grieve.’ ”

Thus the young king. And ofttimes would he ride

Forth from his capital’s loud roar and din ;

One day he saw a blue-eyed maid, and cried,—

“ Eternity were short to love her in.”

THE ROBIN'S SNOW:

CHILD-RHYME

The first day of April fell the big white flakes of snow;
Said the Bluebird to the Redbreast, "Oh ! oh! oh!"
Said the Redbreast to the Bluebird, "My good Sir, don't you
 know
 That this is but a robin's snow?"

"Now come, Neighbour Bluebird, let us loudly, cheerly
 sing,"
(And he shook a monstrous snowflake off his pretty little
 wing)
"For, spite of the snow, 'tis the dear, dear spring,"
 So the Redbreast and the Bluebird did sing.

The second day of April the sun did brightly glow;
The Bluebird and the Redbreast went hopping to and fro;
Said the Redbreast to the Bluebird, "I was confident, you
 know,
 That that was but a robin's snow."

PARABLE FOR THE TIMES

I saw two robins yesternight;
They fought adown the garden path,
Their feathers flew, sore was their wrath:
It was, in sooth, a dreadful sight.

“Hold, hold, rash fowls! I’ve often read,
‘Birds in their little nests agree’;
Your tiny bills can never be
To tear each other’s eyes,” I said.

“Is’t love has caused your deadly hate?
Some Juliet or Imogen
Has set you by the ears, I ween;
’Twere better far to arbitrate,—

“To slay each other seems a pity.”
Each little robin cocked his head,
And fiercely whisked his tail, and said,
“Sir, we’re the church committee.”

Out west the owls all say "To who?"

In Boston's groves, "To whom?" quite rightly;
But little bluebirds chant in Latin,
"*Cui? cui?*" eruditely.

AT A PORTRAIT SHOW

I loiter here: on every side
Are stately dames of ancient race,
Younger, and fairer too, than she,
Yet something draws me to that face;
So kind it is, so pure and sweet—
A happy fate I trust was hers!
Who was she? Nay, the words I read
Are only these: "Unknown. By Greuse."

And still I linger, loath to go,
And study those large hazel eyes,
The faintly flushing cheeks, the lips
That answer by a mild surprise.
Who wert thou, lovely reticence,
Ere yet the century had flown?
But no reply comes down the years,
Save only this: "By Greuse. Unknown."

THE OLD TOWN CLOCK

“So the old Town Clock is dead!”
Sadly all the people said.
Time’s afflictions long he bore,
Yet could now endure no more,
And one evening, said, “Tick, tock!”
Little short of six o’clock;
“Tick, tock!” that was all he said,
And the old Town Clock was dead.

Late the Clock had shown each day
Intellectual decay,
Often stopped at dead o’ night,
Seldom told the time aright—
Striking twelve at half-past four,
Striking twenty-five or more;
“Nothing much,” we said, “though queer”—
Now we drop a silent tear;
Little guessed we, you and I,
That so soon the Clock would die.

But our tears fall now too late—
Rest thy pendulum, thy weight!
Never in the stilly night,
Never in the noonday light,
Never to the end of time
Hear we thy familiar chime.
When my hour comes, may I be,
Ancient time-piece, mourned like thee!

TO ———

God took the south-west wind, and chose a bit;
Moulded blush roses—myriads—in with it;
Then washed what he had made in fresh May dew;
And kissed it on the lips, and called it—YOU.

INVITATION

Know you where the apple-trees
Cast their petals on the breeze,
Where to spring-bedazzled sight
All the world is pink and white?

Nay then, tell me, do you know
Where the wee white violets grow,—
Where the small, sweet blossoms wait
For a school-girl and her mate?

But in meadows cool and green
Fairer flower was never seen,
Never sweet white violet blew
That was half so sweet as you.

Leave your tasks, whate'er they be,
Come a-maying, dear, with me;
Apple blossoms fade with May,
Violets must pass away.

TO A YOUNG FAIR MAID

A certain little maid I know
Of tender years, fourteen or so,
Who says she does not care at all
To know how Cæsar conquered Gaul,
Crushed the Helvetii, and such,
And that she hates it, oh so much !

This gentle maid of whom I write
Is very fair and very bright;
She's sometimes gay and sometimes sad,
But seldom cross, and never bad,
And from her head down to her feet
A little lady, pure and sweet.

Now, pretty sweetness, do your best
With "*Gallia divisa est*,"
And think on Latin word and rule,
Which are the proper things in school.
If you'll but heed my halting rhyme,
You'll vanquish Cæsar, dear, in time.

A NEW LEGEND OF ST. VALENTINE

There lived in Rome a worthy saint
 (None better in the almanac !)
Who used to kiss the pretty maids,
 Of whom in Rome there was no lack.

For such and other pious deeds
 The pagans did destroy this bishop,
And as he perished at the stake
 He sent a mighty saintly wish up,—

That he might gain a paradise
 Where there be girls in goodly host;
And with this prayer ('tis my prayer too)
 The holy man gave up the ghost.

But when at hand of cruel man
 The sweet St. Valentine was dying,
They say that every girl in Rome
 Did make her black eyes red with crying.

'Twas second month and fourteenth day
 The good saint's martyrdom befell,
And since that year the day has been
 A sentimental festival.

SWEDENBORG IN LONDON

In Coldbath Fields, of London Town,
Thro' streets where humble craftsmen wrought,
A hundred years ago and more
A mighty seer strolled, and thought.

Behold him, with his wig, and sword,
And cane, in neat brown velvet clad;
And see! he pauses in his walk
To notice proper lass or lad.

I love to picture him, who walked
In spirit oft where seraphs dwell,
With pockets stored with gingerbread
For the sweet children he loved well.

Long since the wise old Swede hath passed,
And (as we say) they too are dead,
Who shared as little children once
The gentle prophet's gingerbread.

PARODY: ESAU CRUMM

(WITH APOLOGIES TO E. A. R.)

Withal a hairy man was Esau Crumm,—
His beard was very bushy, thick, and long.
He drank hard cider, which be sure was wrong,
And in his speech was very close and mum.
On every theme save one was Esau dumb;
But on his beard he would the talk prolong
For hours,—yes, his language too was strong,
And of that beard he wearied people some.

There came a man to Gardiner Town one day,
A stranger, one who never drank, because
(He told the folk) he did not think it right.
He had a beard, so Gardiner gossips say,
Longer by half a yard than Esau's was.
And Esau signed the pledge that very night.

WHY THE STARS SHINE IN THE NIGHT

*Children, can you tell me right
Why the stars shine in the night,
Why they always steal away
When the sun brings in the day?
Nay, I see you do not know.*

*Hear then what a poet said,
Good Professor Arndt, now dead;
I have read it long ago.
Cogitate it in your beds,
Let it work in all your heads,
Then come tell me, if you can,
Little lass and little man,
If he gave the reason right,
Why the Stars Shine in the Night.*

The Sun on his travels was just starting out
Round the world;
And "We're going too," the little Stars shout,
"Round the world!"
Then the Sun he scolded them, "You stay at home!
For I'd burn out your little bright eyes as I roam
On my fiery way round the world."

Then the Stars came and spake to the fair moon on high,
After dark:
"O dear Moon enthroned in the billowy sky
After dark,
Let us wander with thee, for thy gentle light
Will not dim our poor little eyes so bright."
So they help her to lighten the dark.

WHY THE STARS SHINE IN THE NIGHT

Hail Stars, and hail Moon, thou dearest and best,
In the night !

Thou knowest what silently dwells in the breast
In the night.

Come haste ye and light up the skies, that I may
In happiness join in your heavenly play,
The cheerful play of the night.

PRAYER FOR A FRIEND

(B. A. M.)

Lord, I know him true to me :
Keep him ever true to Thee ;

Keep him from the foul and mean ;
Keep him innocent and clean.

If once more I see his face
Grant that I may never trace

What I find not in those eyes,
Kind and beautiful and wise.

If I never see him more,
If upon no farther shore,

Lip to lip and heart to heart,
We should meet, no more to part,—

Bring him to the last black goal,
White, and of untainted soul.

Take him from me, Lord, and then
Keep him safe for me. Amen.

TO G. M. B. ON HIS JUBILEE DAY

Thou of that noble band who unappall'd
Threw off the hampering shield of dogma when
Faith's battle-line seem'd brok'n; worthy to be call'd
One of the dear Lord Christ his Gentlemen;

Rever'd; belov'd: many thy days and pure,
For thou thy days hast liv'd as one among
The hovering great, who fear not but endure,
The "choir invisible" that one hath sung.

Lancaster, 5 Aug., 1897.

IN GRANDMA'S HOUSE :

CHILD-RHYME

There is a room in grandma's house
Where many treasures be,
All relics of the olden time,
Or from beyond the sea.

There lovely shiny dresses are
Arrayed upon the walls,
The dresses that my grandma wore
When she went out to balls;

Great-grandpa's hat and wig are there,
Hung up on ancient nails;
A pair of shoes, a pair of specs,
A coat with swallow tails;

A cabinet of china cups,
Like egg-shells white and thin—
Ah, me, 'tis quite a stretch of years
Since there was tea within !

A Chinese mandarin that nods
In such a civil way,
As if to say, "Good morning, sir !
'Tis quite a pleasant day."

But all the things that room contains
'Tis very hard to see;
For generally the door is locked,
And grandma keeps the key.

TRIOLET OF DEAR GRANDMAMMA

A bonnet old-style
Hides a face sweet and arch;
I really must smile
At the bonnet old-style
But mark her eye's wile!
Grandma's eighty in March.
'Tis a bonnet old-style
Hides a face sweet and arch.

THE STEEPLE CHASE

*Away in the City of Spindles, where the Merrimack flows to
the sea,
Little maid, little maid, with the nut-brown hair, will you
sometimes think of me?
Just once in a way, at the close of the day?—And then I
sha'n't so much mind,
Being ugly, and awkward, and lonely, and sad,—just a dull
old Harvard grind.*

Can it be, my dear lady, you never have heard
Of the great wind in Ireland? Well, it occurred
Some half century since, in the year '43.
My friend Pat O'Growley related to me
That a steeple was blown far away to the sea.
But the wind—oh my gracious! for three mortal days
It blew and it blew, and in fear and amaze
The folk told their beads, and they wept, and they curst.
In the County of Galway 'twas rather the worst.
Why! on the third and the windiest day
Barns were blown down, and huts carried away,
And haystacks went galloping over the land,
And great oak-trees had all they could do for to stand,
And brickbats and suchlike like leaves on the strand
Went flying.

In one place—I can't speak the name,
Some small country parish untroubled by fame—
The steeple blew off in the night. At the rise
Of the sun all the people stood rubbing their eyes—
They thought 'twas a dream unusually "quare";
For the elegant church-steeple wasn't where
(You'll agree) a respectable steeple should perch—
'Twas blown clear away from the roof of the church.

THE STEEPLE CHASE

They printed a handbill: "Lost or Stolen, a Steeple !
Now whosoever returns to the people"
Of so-and-so parish "their steeple receives
Five guineas in gold!" Ah, deeply it grieves
Me to say 'twas in vain. But from Belfast to Cork
The matter created a vast deal of talk.
Soon they heard of it on t'other side George's Channel;
And to Leeds, where you know they make so much flannel,
And even to London the sad story ran, I
Understand that at Glasgow they said, "'Tisna' canny!"
Till at last the tale of the steeple's mad caper
Filled a column in some big American paper,
The whole truth of the matter—perhaps rather more,
With particulars no one had told of before.
All was vain, as I said, for—alas and alack!
The lost church-steeple was never brought back;
And that's the true reason, depend you upon it,
The church in that parish has no steeple on it.

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